

Voters Seek 'Wright' Direction

By KEITH L. MARTIN

Town Meeting has turned over its authority to determine users for a renovated Wright Building to the Board of Selectmen after approving Article 6 on Monday night.

The article was passed by the needed two-thirds majority of citizen votes and permits selectmen to negotiate with non-profit corporations to lease space within the building, rather than having the uses decided by Town

Special Town Meeting

Meeting voters. To date, five interested parties, including the Student Union Association and Duxbury Rural and Historical Society, have expressed interest in using the building. However, no final agreement has been reached among the five groups and the town on how much space each will get in the building.

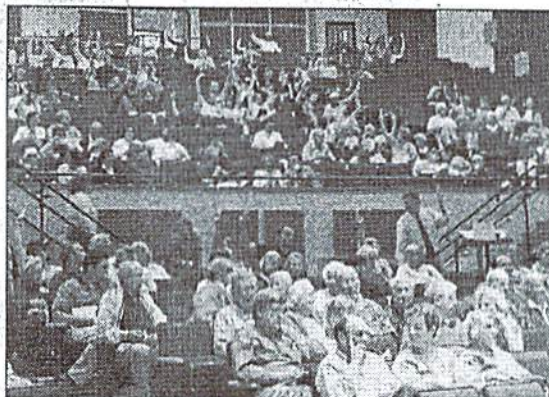
Leading off discussion on Article 6, former selectman Ruth Rowley asked for an amendment to the article to address the wishes of Georgiana Wright, who bequeathed the building to the town in 1907 with the understanding it be used as a library and meeting area.

Rowley wanted to add language to the article that allowed the selectmen to negotiate leases subject to the town securing removal of that restriction, which would require an act of the Plymouth County Probate Court.

Rowley said that this had been put off since 1995 when the library moved into the former high school building and since uses had not been determined, it would be best if the town remove the restriction "to honor the wonderful gift" given by Wright, she said.

Town Counsel Robert Troy countered that this action could do more harm than good, given that Harvard University is the benefactor of the building if it is not used as Wright stipulated. If they objected to the use, he said, they could take over the building and the town would lose the structure outright.

He instead suggested letting the selectmen see what the uses would be under the chosen tenants and that he was sure Wright's wishes would be considered in those deliberations. He pointed out that one of the stipulations, for example, was for a reading room, a use suggested by the DR&HS for citizens to read and review town archives.



Special Town Meeting voters hold up their cards to signify a "yes" vote on Article 7. The yeas outweighed the nays, 244-86 and the article passed.

David Jenkins, president of the DR&HS, agreed that the stipulation should be left alone as the suggested archival space by his group "fulfilled the spirit of the gift."

Rowley rejected the "reading room" idea as fitting within Wright's stipulations and added that she hoped to see the issue addressed as she said Troy promised her back in 1995 and hoped that the matter wouldn't have to be resolved through "independent action against the town."

Town voters agreed with Troy and Jenkins, voting down Rowley's amendment and subse-



'SPECIAL' RECOGNITION: Before the formal business of Special Town Meeting on Monday, Neal Merry was honored for his 30 years of service to the town with the Board of Assessors. Merry received a citation from Duxbury's state representatives, Tom O'Brien (above) and Daniel Webster as well as citations from town selectmen, Governor Mitt Romney and the state Senate.

quently voting in favor of Article 6 as it was presented by the two-thirds majority needed because the act required negotiation of a lease.

With selectmen now in charge of the fate of the occupants of the building, the next step was determining what it would take for them to use the building. Under Article 7, voters were asked to appropriate \$153,000 in CPA funds for construction and bid documents to restore and re-use the building.

Community Preservation Committee Chairwoman Holly Morris presented the findings of a study conducted by Boston-based architectural firm Feingold, Alexander and Associates.

Tussock Brook Road's Ed McGlinchey, a former CPC member, voiced his concerns that the 1967 addition to the building was not truly historical, so CPA funds should not be used for its renovation and that the entire project will need more money to make use of the building a reality.

"We are being asked for \$153,000 and we've already spent \$50,000 on the study," he said. "At the next Town Meeting or next year, this will require funds in the range of \$1.4-1.5 million for [renovations]. So we are actually being asked for \$1.6 million in funds for a building where two-thirds of it is not really historic."

Morris said that while many in town do not love the 1960s addition to the building, it does have architectural and historical significance according to Feingold, Alexander and Associates. She also confirmed that money for renovations to the building would be requested from CPA funds at a future Town Meeting.

Other residents voiced their opinions that approving money for bids while uses were still up in the air did not sit well with them.

Selectman John Tuffy said that various plans need to be presented to see what kind of uses to support. He later clarified that the potential uses voters were hearing about that night, from a student center to archival space to a location for a book sale, were all potential uses and that plans from the architect would be needed to see if these possibilities could become reality.

After nearly an hour of discussion and as the clock approached 11 p.m. on the first night of Special Town Meeting, a vote was called for, and with the vocal tally too close to determine, Town Moderator Allen Bornheimer called for a count.

When the tellers tallied the votes of those left at the Performing Arts Center, 244 citizens were in favor of Article 7 while 86 were not, meaning the article passed with the required two-thirds approval of citizens since borrowing of the funds may be required.

After the vote, one of the potential users said his group was glad to have citizen support for use of the building.

"I thought it was good healthy debate...but in the end the article was supported and we're pleased with that," said Steve Jones of the Student Union Association.